

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-07 DHA-02 SY-05 SCCT-01 USSS-00 FBIE-00 IO-13

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P R 221650Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8132

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 1439

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS EI

SUBJ: ASSASSINATION OF BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO IRELAND

REF: DUBLIN 1430

1. WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN A BRIEFING BY THE ACTING HEAD OF THE ANGLO-IRISH SECTION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, JOHN MCCOLGAN. HE DESCRIBED THE "MUCHUNT" FOR THE KILLERS OF AMBASSABTR EWART-BIGGS AS THE BIGGEST SINGLE OPERATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT, WITH FOUR THOUSAND POLICE ASSIGNED, ALMOST THE ENTIRE NATIONAL POLICE FORCE, AND THOUSANDS OF ARMY TROOPS ALSO MOBILIZED. EVERY POSSIBLE LEAD IS BEING EXHAUSTIVELY CHECKED OUT, BUT SO FAR THE KILLERS SEEM TO HAVE VANISHED.

2. MCCOLGAN SAID THE GENERAL FEELING IN THE GOVERNMENT, WITHOUT ANY HARD EVIDENCE, IS THAT THE ASSASSINS WERE MOST LIKELY: 1) FROM THE PROVISIONAL IRA, WHICH HAS NOT STAGED A "SPECTACULAR" IN SOME TIME; 2) FROM THE IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY, WHICH IS AN UNDERRATED BUT PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS GROUP QUITE TECHNICALLY CAPABLE  
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OF COMMITTING THIS ASSASSINATION; OR 3) HIRED MERCENARIES

EMPLOYED BY ANY OF THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS--THIS THEORY COMES FROM THE APPARENTLY VERY PROFESSIONAL NATURE OF THE OPERATION.

3. SO FAR THE EFFECT OF THE ASSASSINATION ON ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS HAS BEEN RATHER GOOD, MCCOLGAN SAID, AND THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT, PRESS AND PUBLIC REACTION IN THE UK HAS BEEN GENEROUS. HERE IN DUBLIN THE GOVERNMENT IS RECEIVING WIDE CRITICISM FOR ITS "INEPT" SECURITY PRECAUTIONS, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THERE WILL BE ANY SERIOUS POLITICAL FALLOUT. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HELPED, HE SAID, BY THE SERIOUS MISTAKE OF OPPOSITION LEADER JACK LYNCH WHO QUALIFIED HIS CONDEMNATION OF THE ASSASSINS BY SAYING "WHATEVER THEIR MOTIVATIONS..." THIS BIT OF AMBIGUITY HAS NOT GONE DOWN WELL, HE SAID.

4. MCCOLGAN SAID THAT IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR YET WHETHER THE TARGET WAS AMBASSADOR EWART-BIGGS OR PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY CUBBON. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS CONDUCTING EXTENSIVE INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND, IN COOPERATION WITH THE GOI, IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET SOME LEADS, SO FAR WITHOUT SUCCESS.

5. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE TIGHTENED OUR OWN SECURITY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, IT DOES NOT SEEM THAT THIS EVENT PRESAGES ANY PARTICULAR IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF OTHER DIPLOMATS IN IRELAND. THE SAD FACT IS THAT THE BRITISH DIPLOMATS HAVE BEEN A SPECIAL TARGET OF VARIOUS TERRORIST GROUPS, ALL RELATING TO THE COMPLEX SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND. DESPITE NEBULOUS TIES TO OTHER INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, THE IRA AND ITS OFFSHOOTS HAVE NOT SHOWN ANY PROPENSITY TO JOIN IN GENERAL WORLD-WIDE TERRORIST ACTIVITY, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE BOMBING OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY SOME YEARS AGO, WHICH WAS PROBABLY DONE AT LEAST WITH IRA ASSISTANCE. HOWEVER, AFTER THE EVENTS OF YESTERDAY WE ARE NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES AND ARE TAKING A HARD LOOK AT ALL OF OUR SECURITY MEASURES. CURLEY

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## Message Attributes

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**Subject:** ASSASSINATION OF BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO IRELAND  
**TAGS:** PINS, EI, UK, (EWART-BIGGS, CHRISTOPHER)  
**To:** STATE  
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